

Another parking debate for the Bend City Council

One of the most dangerous places on earth can be in downtown Bend between a parking spot-hungry driver and an empty spot. The driver's eyes light up, the jaws drop down and there can be a herky-jerky swerve across lanes to stake a claim.

Just as impassioned can be the debate over parking in Bend. Paid parking. Requiring permits. Angled or straight? These may not sound like the varsity in the world of public policy topics. They do hit home, or at least on the street right in front of the home.

So when the Bend City Council turns again to the subject of parking this week, limbic systems can shoot to 10. First to consider on this week's agenda are parklets. Those are those little carve outs of parking spaces to give businesses more room to operate during the pandemic. They could not save every business. They did allow restaurants and bars to spread their footprint out into the street, giving them more of a fighting chance due to the spacing requirements of the pandemic.

Parklets were a temporary measure. They do devour parking spaces where they can be scarce. If they help more businesses stay open and thrive, what is so wrong with that?

The council is going to be consid-

ering allowing parklets more permanently. If you have concerns and objections, read up on the idea and sound off. More information on this page: tinyurl.com/bendparklet. You can email councilors at council@bendoregon.gov.

The second parking matter on the council agenda is not clearly spelled out. It just says: "minimum parking requirements." Those three words pack a wallop. Groups have rallied for and against. Should Bend require a minimum amount of parking for new homes, apartments and businesses? Or should it let the developer decide? And what should any shift in policy mean for parking lots that already exist?

Hefty questions. The answers the councilors pick won't get them promoted to governor. They are important. As for you, you could lose out if you don't get your thoughts on the matter to councilors. You can write them at council@bendoregon.gov or write us a letter to the editor of up to 250 words and email us at letters@bendbulletin.com.

Prescribed burns are worth the smoke

Spring brings budding flowers, hopefully showers and also smoke from prescribed burns. We can guess which people don't like the most.

Remember though how bad the smoke got last year. It was terrible, and the air was unhealthy to breathe for days on end. Air quality was the worst it had ever been, at least since the state started recording.

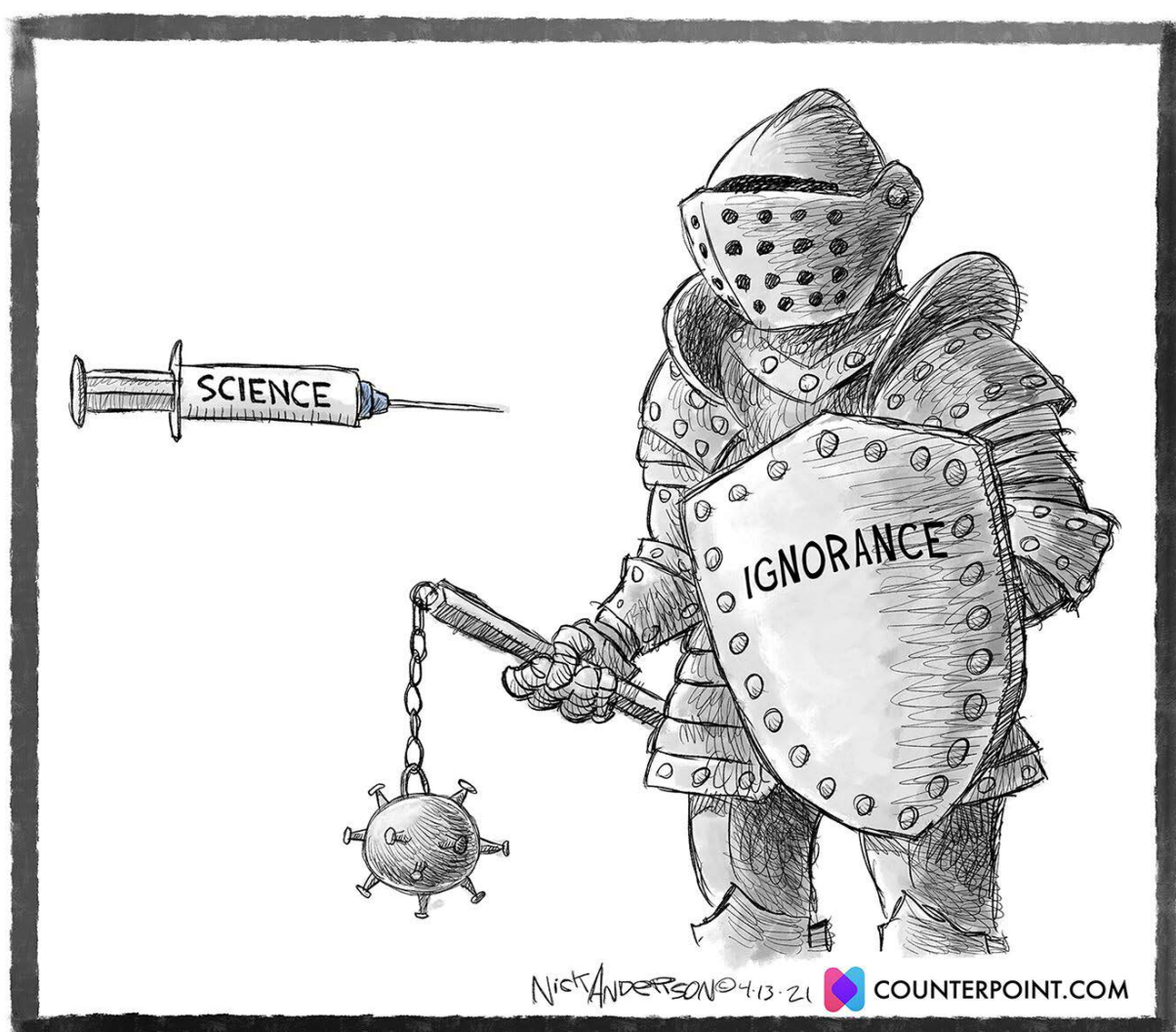
Prescribed burns will not prevent forest fires. The fires will come, anyway. Prescribed burns can lower the intensity of fires and sometimes make it easier to fight them. They can also actually help improve the

health of the forest. Historically forests weren't as dense as many are now.

One of the best ways to learn more is to go to the Deschutes Forest Collaborative's website. It even has a live map of planned burning.

When they burn, forest officials do try to pick the right conditions and do their best to ensure communities don't get wreathed in smoke. The smoke from prescribed burns can be unpleasant even unhealthy for some people. But it is much better to do it now and to have fewer situations where the smoke is less under control.

Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.



My Nickel's Worth

Brown's vaccination policy was right

As seniors, age 76 and 80, and former educators, my husband and I fully support the priority given to teachers for the vaccine. We understand the visceral fear of mortality risks in our age group, but the fact is, our ages make us more vulnerable to everything, including falling, deteriorating joints, organ issues and a variety of terminal diseases.

The flip side is our privilege of staying safely at home with no obligation to work supporting a family or ensuring our societal wheels keep turning! Teachers and support staffs have no more choice in fulfilling job contracts in getting our kids back to school than doctors and nurses have in keeping us healthy. Likewise, any necessary group living populations have no choice for safety, including prisoners, essential retail workers and any senior living facilities. They all keep our immediate lives functioning!

Yes, some folks have been lucky to nab leftover doses out of order, but overall, our friends support Governor Kate Brown's team efforts to meet as many needs as possible. At this age, patience counts more than privilege.

—Wendie Vermillion, Sisters

Lawler for the library board

I would like to thank The Bulletin for its April 7, endorsement of my bid for reelection to the Deschutes Public Library's board of directors. I'm the incumbent representative for Zone 3 which primarily encompasses south Deschutes County, including La Pine where I've lived for almost 17 years.

I have volunteered at the La Pine Library for 16 years. For the last 10 years, I've had the privilege of serving on the library board and am currently board president. The board works closely with the library director to ensure that our facilities and services keep pace with population growth and changing community needs.

I'm proud to be associated with this organization. Our library branches provide extensive, free resources that all

county residents can readily access, either in person or online. Our library system is considered one of the best in Oregon and has achieved national recognition as well. This is due to the hard work and dedication of our amazing staff — from the employees who greet you when you visit any of our branches, to the many folks (both paid and volunteer) who work behind the scenes to ensure the excellent service you have come to expect.

If you think as highly of your library as I do, I would again like to ask south county residents for their vote so I can continue my involvement on the board of this first-rate library system.

—Martha Lawler, La Pine

On your left

I have been bicycling in and around Bend for many years, east side, west side, all-around Central Oregon, and even beyond, and I have a pet peeve that I want to air. No, it is not about drivers in their cars versus riders on their bicycles; it is about bicyclists versus bicyclists. I mostly ride on my heavy steel touring bike, so I am pretty slow going up Century or Skyliner, or doing the Twin Bridges scenic route, and thus am often passed by other riders on lighter bikes, and with younger legs.

That is fine with me; but here is why I get peeved: maybe 1 in 10 will let me know they are overtaking me, no shout-out, no howdy, just suddenly they are there, whizzing by, at arm's distance (or less), often startling me. I believe that it is only good biking etiquette to let someone know when you are approaching and going to pass. It is not only good etiquette, but also safer for both bicyclists, and more friendly to do so. So, I am asking all cyclists out there, whether you are on a road bike, mountain bike, or e-bike, to join me in a campaign this riding season to ride more courteously, safely, and friendly, and give a shout out when you are about to overtake another cyclist. "Hey Bob, on your left" or just "Hey, on your left!" Even if it is not me, your gesture will be appreciated! Thanks!

—Bob Sanders, Bend

Traffic enforcement is broken in the United States. Here's how we can fix it.

BY CHRISTY E. LOPEZ
The Washington Post

If we are serious about preventing needless deaths and routine humiliation of Black and Latino drivers at the hands of police, we need to change how we promote traffic safety in the United States.

Police make 20 million traffic stops every year. That means millions of opportunities for things to go tragically wrong, as they did not only for Daunte Wright this month in Minnesota but also for Philando Castile, Sandra Bland, Walter Scott and countless others who escaped with their lives but whose lives nonetheless were forever impacted.

Are these 20 million stops worth this cost? Absolutely not. In fact, only a fraction of them are for the purpose of traffic safety. Traffic stops often are about one of two things instead: raising revenue, or using minor traffic violations as a pretext to investigate people for something entirely unrelated to traffic safety.

There is some indication that the stop of Army 2nd Lt. Caron Nazario by Windsor, Virginia, police — the video of which went viral this month because of the dehumanizing way Nazario was treated — may be an example of what happens when towns use police traffic enforcement to raise revenue. Windsor has a population of 2,700. It is fair to ask why it has any police — there is already a county



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sheriff, after all — much less seven of them. Part of the reason may be that 6% of Windsor's revenue comes from traffic fines.

And Windsor pales in comparison to many other small towns in the United States that generate more than half of their revenue from fines and fees grounded largely in traffic enforcement. Cities with more Black residents rely more on traffic tickets and fines for revenue, and these systems can push people into poverty.

What happened to Nazario is an inevitable consequence of this approach: Police are encouraged to prioritize traffic enforcement; people, especially Black and Latino people, experience these stops as somewhere

between annoying and terrifying and respond accordingly; police — desensitized to the harm of the intrusion and emboldened to expect submission — overreact.

It may also be that Nazario was stopped, as Wright appears to have been, as a "pretext" to conduct an otherwise legally unjustified investigation. The Supreme Court legalized this tactic in *Whren v. United States*. Under *Whren*, as long as police can find some infraction, they can stop and question the driver, often conduct a limited search of the car, require the occupants to sit on the curb, and try to get the driver to consent to a more thorough search of their bodies or their vehicle. This might not be

so bad if these searches had a good chance of preventing serious crimes. But data shows that few stops serve a significant public safety purpose — usually less than 1% turn up any contraband at all.

What's more, police spend a lot of time on traffic stops that even some agencies have found not worth the effort. One study found that in just 11 law enforcement agencies, police spent 85,000 officer hours over 10 years just on potential nonmoving violations.

This means that for little public safety payoff, we've created a racially biased, time-consuming and dangerous traffic enforcement system, and in the process relinquished our constitutional rights. We have made our roads a Fourth Amendment-free zone in which officers literally can stop anyone they want based on random selection or, worse, racial bias. Study after study shows that Black drivers are searched more often than white drivers during stops, but found to have guns or drugs less often.

There are at least three things we can do to reduce the harm and racial disparities of traffic enforcement without compromising public safety.

First, we can take much of traffic enforcement out of the hands of police. Some places are shifting traffic enforcement to unarmed traffic safety experts. Relatedly, we can make better use of transportation design

and technology. There are legitimate concerns about where red-light and speed cameras are placed, but I've never seen one pepper-spray a motorist or show a strange proclivity for targeting Black drivers when it was light enough to see skin color. This shift would reserve police stops for immediate threats — such as drunken driving — that arguably require a police response.

Second, cities and states should reject pretext stops, by prohibiting their use, reducing the infractions for which police can stop people, and cleaning up often-antiquated vehicle codes to remove violations that have little to do with public safety and everything to do with allowing police to stop people at will. Pro tip: Prohibiting air fresheners hanging from rearview mirrors is not motivated by a traffic safety concern.

Third, cities should shift the resources currently used for our harm-inefficient traffic enforcement system to evidence-informed programs for preventing gun violence and reducing the harm of illicit drugs.

We should encourage and learn from those efforts to create a traffic safety system that does not kill and humiliate.

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